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AUTHOR	Howell, James C.
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ABSTRACT

Youth violence and the juvenile justice system in the United States are explored. Part 1 takes stock of the situation. The first chapter discusses the origins and evaluation of the juvenile justice system, and the second considers the contributions of the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act to the existing juvenile justice system. Chapter 3 begins an analysis of youth violence and the responses of society that continues in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 5 reviews a major change in the administration of juvenile justice that has resulted in the transfer of adolescents to the adult criminal justice system and confinement in adult prisons. Part II of the book proposes modifications to U.S. delinquency policies, reviewing current knowledge about youth gangs and drug trafficking. Chapter 8 presents a methodology for improving understanding of risk factors for youth violence, and chapter 9 recommends a strategy for dealing with serious and chronic delinquency. Overall, the analysis shows that the juvenile contributions to violence in the United States are small, and that, with the exception of homicide, a significant increase has not occurred. Most of the increase that is found may be accounted for by juvenile gangs. A comprehensive strategy for developing more effective prevention programs, achieving a better match between offender characteristics and treatment programs, and a more cost-effective juvenile justice system are needed. The current emphasis on punishment rather than prevention and rehabilitation is neither philosophically sound nor effective. An appendix presents a comprehensive strategy for serious, chronic, and violent juvenile offenders. (Contains 30 figures, 25 tables, and numerous references.) (SLD)

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